
Memories of the Great War: Africa in the Face of the First World War: An Historiography

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The historiography of World War I in Africa has come a long way. The first general histories of the war were written when the war itself was but a few days old. However, the literature on the war in regard to Africa remained underdeveloped for decades. Slowly, the scholars began examining the war in Africa and the role of Africans in the war. Although the basic fact that Africans fought in the war is indisputable, interpretations of Africa's contributions to the war as well as the impact of the war on Africa differed greatly, depending on the time in which the interpretation was formulated. Until recently, works on Africa in World War I were few, probably because western historians did most of the writings about the Great War. The last two decades, however, have seen a wellspring of scholarship that promises finally to tell the full global story of the war—including the important role of Africa and Africans.

This paper provides a historiographical overview of World War I in Africa. This write-up seeks to assess the roles and impact of the war on Africa. Whereas most European scholars argue Africans contributed mainly as soldiers and that the war was fought in Europe, emerging literature, mostly works of African historians and some Europeans, emphasize that key battles were fought in Africa, and that the Africans contributed not only as soldiers, but in monetary and material ways. The war, in fact, had a major impact on the African continent. This historiography survey brings to light the transitions over time in the literature about World War I in Africa.

Virtually all the scholars surveyed in this paper agree that Africans were combatants and Africa was a theatre in World War I. However, most of the writings in the 1960s and 1970s focused military contributions of Africans, neglecting North Africa, British, and Portuguese East Africa as theatres. These works also ignored the role of women, changes in the political map, and the African movements for independence growing out of the experiences gained from the war. On the other hand, writings from the 1980s began to consider the role of women, and more recent studies take up other neglected issues like changes to the political map of Africa caused by the war, the role of North Africa, the experience of women, and the outbreak of pandemic influenza.

James Edmonds' book *A Short History of World War I* (1968) argues that World War I in Africa took place in four campaign sites: Togoland, South West Africa, Cameroons, and German East Africa (now Tanganyika).¹ He also notes Germany relied on the South African Dutch in fighting against the British. The Germans only depended on African tribes and added them to the Union Forces during the later period, when hostilities in the region increased. Initially, Germans believed they could fight and win the war depending solely on white forces. Nonetheless, the superiority of the Triple Entente forces compelled Germany to change its decision and start relying heavily on African troops. Edmonds confirms Africans fought in both Africa and Europe for their colonial masters. He affirms that recruited African troops were divided into two groups, with 50,000

¹ James Edmonds, *A Short History of World War I* (New York: Greenwood, 1968), 397.

focusing on German East Africa and 25,000 going to Europe.² Not only did Africans contribute militarily as soldiers, but Africans also supported the war with four airplanes which aided the Entente powers in its campaigns. These airplanes were sent to various war theaters. A country like the Gold Coast contributed towards the sponsorship of airplanes. The chiefs and other traditional authorities in the various towns made voluntary contributions which were used to purchase airplanes in support of the war.³

On the impact of the war on Africa, Edmonds notes 192 were killed, 557 were wounded, 84 died of diseases, and 434 were disabled. By 1916, the number of Africans fighting for Germany had fallen significantly as result of death from casualties or diseases.⁴ Also, of those who fell ill, 472 died, and 8,219 were left seriously ill. Edmonds also demonstrates how diseases, mainly malaria, dysentery, yellow fever, and pneumonia killed many Africans during and after the war. Uncooked rice, for instance, which most of the Africans depended on as a source of food caused dysentery.⁵ These casualties reduced the population in Africa as many suffered from death both on the battlefield and at home.

Edmonds' work contributes to the historiography on the First World War in diverse ways. Distinctively, he posits Africans provided four airplanes in support of the war. Nonetheless, he entirely neglected North Africa, a region which contributed significantly to the war. Additionally, the Gold Coast, a region on which Britain depended heavily for support was only briefly discussed. He indicated the Gold Coast authorities did not hesitate to defend its territories at any cost. Yet, Edmonds made no mention of the strategies they used in defending these territories. Moreover, his study on Africa only cursorily identified campaigns which took place in Portuguese East Africa. In East Africa, his primary focus was on Tanganyika. The roles of North Africa as a contributor in the war, the over £44,000 the Gold Coast paid to cater for the Togoland bill, and the various defensive strategies the Gold Coast adopted in defending Elmina and Komenda against the Central Powers' attacks all were missing from Edmonds' discussion.

On the impacts of the war, Edmonds speaks only about death, diseases, and casualties, neglecting other broad impacts on Africa. The price of cocoa, which fell in the last months of 1916 due to the British blockade of trade with the Central Powers and their colonies, the high prices of food and other basic needs that affected postwar Gold Coast from the 1920s, and the family structure in the Gold Coast that changed after the First World War which made women increasingly respected as breadwinners were not elaborated upon.

Unlike Edmonds, Byron Farwell's book *The Great War in Africa 1914-1918* focused on campaigns in various town levels, as compared to Edmonds who focused on campaigns in regional levels. He argued the First World War took place in West Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, and the Cameroons. Lake Tanganyika, Tabora, Doula, Mora, Konigsberg, Longido, and Tanga were towns where the campaigns in Africa took place. According to Farwell, Corporal Ernest Thomas of "C" Squadron fired the first shot in Africa on August 22, 1914.⁶ Farwell describes how the Gold Coast Regiment marched against Lome, at that time the capital of Togoland, and forced the indigenes to surrender.⁷ On August 12th, a patrol of the Gold Coast Regiment marched on the Germans, and shots were exchanged.⁸ On the conquest of German South-West Africa, Farwell posited the army was made up of volunteers and regulars.⁹ Unlike Edmonds, Farwell argued that the

² Edmonds, *A Short History of World War I*, 397.

³ Charles Lucas, *The Gold Coast and The War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), 48.

⁴ Edmonds, *A Short History of World War I*, 400.

⁵ Edmonds, *A Short History of World War I*, 400.

⁶ Byron Farwell, *The Great War in Africa* (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 1989), 21.

⁷ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 25.

⁸ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 26.

⁹ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 86.

war extended to British East Africa, where some fighting took place with Germans inciting the natives to attack the white settlers.¹⁰

For the first time, Farwell acknowledges the role of women in the war as suppliers of water and other products, which is neglected in many works. Without water, man and beast grew thirsty, and the engines silted up with sand until women supplied them with water. Tracking parties led a procession of women carrying water to various camps.¹¹ The water which women supplied was taken to the traction engine that carried boat overland to Lake Tanganyika. Again, women filled the position of nurses and medical practitioners to deliver services to the troops and others who were injured. War spread diseases such as chigger.¹² In hospitals in South Africa, beds overflowed with people suffering from diseases or injuries.¹³ Farwell's focus on the role of women as suppliers during the war would probably be attributed to the explosion of women's history which grew in the 1980s. Furthermore, African carriers were the suppliers of food and water to the soldiers. The absence of these basic needs would have made it difficult for troops to survive.¹⁴ Although some villages had little to eat, resulting in malnutrition, the need to fight made military commanders and local authorities devise means to assist the troops with their basic needs.

Farwell argues the war caused the destruction of public and private buildings in some areas in Africa. German troops defecated on furniture, floors, and in buildings probably because they had abandoned the properties and wanted to prevent the Triple Entente forces from getting a place of refuge.¹⁵ Another devastating impact Farwell discussed was the destruction of some towns in Africa. The Royal Naval Forces bombarded various towns.¹⁶ Resulting upheaval fed diseases that killed many Africans with most suffering from malaria and blackwater fever.¹⁷ The war caused animal brutality. The shots and bombs killed many oxen, goats, and mules. The war imposed suffering on most cattle and horses, while others fled into the forest during the hostilities.¹⁸

Farwell's book contributes greatly to the historiography. Like Edmonds, Farwell depicts a war fought in both Europe and Africa, with Africans fighting to support their colonial masters. In contrast to Edmonds' book, Farwell devotes chapters to the campaigns in various towns, such as Lake Tanganyika, Tabora, Doula, Mora, Konigsberg, Longido, and Tanga. He categorizes them into regions like Cameroons and German East Africa, as Edmonds discuss. On the contributions of Africa, he avers that the French invaded Togoland on August 6, 1914, using 535 African soldiers and some 200 carriers, as well as Senegalese tirailleurs.¹⁹ Relying heavily on primary sources, Farwell approaches issues as ethnohistorians do, depending more on African narratives from eyewitnesses and using local terminologies like Atakpane, the local name for a region in German Togoland. For the first time, women's role as suppliers of water and other products as well as their service as nurses was acknowledged. On the impact of the war, Farwell briefly described casualties, death, and diseases Africa suffered. The war caused the death of many Africans, while other military and non-military men were injured brutally. He also laid emphasis on the mass destruction of towns, buildings, and furniture.

Nonetheless, Farwell avoids the Northern Africa campaigns. Besides, he neglected the Gold Coast, a region where Britain recruited most troops and used their territories for operation. He fails

¹⁰ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 117.

¹¹ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 228.

¹² Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 298-299.

¹³ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 309.

¹⁴ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 69.

¹⁵ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 70.

¹⁶ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 69-71.

¹⁷ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 71.

¹⁸ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 71.

¹⁹ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 17-26.

to provide a detailed description of the defensive strategies which the local authorities of the colonies used in defending themselves against the German invasion. The existence of German Togoland on the borders of Gold Coast alarmed authorities into using diverse means to defend themselves against possible German attacks. Lastly, some economic impacts of the war are neglected, such as the £500,000 taken from the Gold Coast reserve funds and invested in the war loan in London, which reduced the colony's revenue, together with the rapid growth of cocoa and the Gold Coast Mahogany trade which developed between the Gold Coast and America. Before the war, Britain, and France first received export products before distributing to America and other regions for sale. At the peak of the war, the focus of European nations in fighting enemies made it possible for American sailors to move to and fro in Africa and trade with the Africans. Farwell might have addressed also the postwar trade boom which allowed laborers in the Gold Coast to bargain for higher wages.

John Keegan's *The First World War* argues that the major reason for the spread of the war to Africa was due to a power struggle among the European nations who sought to dominate Africa and its colonies. He affirms that British and French used West African Rifles and the Tirailleurs Senegalese to capture Togo, a German colony in West Africa.²⁰ In conquering Kamerun (now Cameroon), the Entente powers combined European and African forces numbering about 4,000; about 1,000 Europeans and 3,000 Africans. He also posits that German skills in fighting during the torrential rainy season forced the allied forces to halt their military operations for some months. Allied forces relaunched an attack when the dry season began. This argument illustrates that the allied forces were not skillful in fighting during the rainy season. The soldiers during the interval period cultivated gardens to support their food supply. In capturing German Cameroon, Keegan argues the Allies faced great resistance from the warrior tribes in the region.

Keegan's work contributes to the scholarship on Africa and the First World War. Like the previous authors, he affirms Africans contributed to the war in support of the colonial masters. He uses more statistical data to present the number of troops recruited and the number of people who died. Keegan asserts the soldiers survived in the forest during the war times by cultivating gardens. This new evidence brings out how the soldiers survived in the bush. His view that the combined forces of the West Africa Rifles together with the Senegalese captured Togo contrasts with the view of Farwell who argues it was the Gold Coast Regiment that marched and captured German Togoland.²¹

On the other hand, Keegan neglected the impact of the war on Africa. His focus was entirely on military operations in the various regions without looking at other contributions and the impact the war had on Africa. He neglected the 1,015 motor drivers recruited for overseas service in East Africa, the engineers and 613 civil officers recruited from the Gold Coast to serve as volunteers, and the outbreak of the pandemic influenza, malaria, and beriberi which the war caused. Moreover, the rampant rebellions that followed the war due to the Europeans appointment of chiefs who were not from the royal family also were neglected. He also overlooked the role of women as suppliers of water, food, other products, and as soldiers who fought in some of the local battles.

Like the previous scholars, Hey Strachan's book *The First World War in Africa*, (2004) affirms the whole of Africa was involved in the war and that blacks fought the white man's war. He asserts Africa contributed militarily by providing troops for their colonial masters. Hey categorizes the battles in Africa into four regional zones which are: Togoland, Cameroons, South-West Africa, and East Africa. He discusses how Britain implemented a defensive plan for the Gold Coast across the Volta and Ada while three companies were stationed at Kumasi and Ada in the bid to seize German

²⁰ John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 206.

²¹ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 25.

Togoland.²² He continues to explain how the Gold Coast protected its North Eastern Frontier and moved towards the Lower Volta as they secured their borders. Germany on the other hand also recruited 1,650 blacks at the initial stage to defend its Cameroons colony.²³

On the impact of the war, he argues it undermined traditional patterns of authority, destroyed economic activities, and pushed Africans to fight for independence. The growth of nationalistic activities and the formation of movements such as the National Congress of British West Africa was due to the aftermaths of the war. Diseases, such as dysentery, typhus, smallpox, malaria, and cholera which devastated the African army, were also major consequences of the war.²⁴ Diseases. These diseases spread throughout Africa to effect places where the war did not take place. Dysentery plagued Africa and resulted in numerous hospitalizations and intestinal diseases. Others suffered chest infections. Hey shows how illness displaced many African men and women from their homes. About 20% of the employed Africans died.²⁵ A percentage of the African population suffered from famine due to the war. Famine broke out in South West Africa and Maji-Maji in East Africa.²⁶ Rice eating tribes became victims of *beriberi*, since they now relied on maize due to the destruction of rice farms. Most Africans suffered from malnutrition.²⁷

Hey's study also shows how regions bordering areas at war implemented diverse strategies to defend their land. This proved especially the case in terms of British colonies shielding themselves against Germany. Hey's work focuses heavily on the military contributions of Africa, yet he neglects other contributions, such as the commitment of funds, non-military personnel and other materials. The war expanded into North Africa, yet, Hey seems to place little to no emphasis on this region.

Paice Edward's *World War I, The African Front* (2008) begins with the Boer War between the British and the Boer Republic of South Africa, which led to mass casualties for both the British and native South Africans.²⁸ He divides his study into five parts, each chapter covering one year between 1914 and 1918. He discusses each year and covers in detail the role of Africa and the impact on Africans. The Allies seizure of German South-West Africa became the first major victory achieved at an estimated cost of £15m. South African Prime Minister Louis Botha—an African not a European—spearheaded the Allied victory in German South-West Africa.²⁹ Europeans recruited numerous African troops to fight on their behalf. When Europeans attempted to recruit African troops to fight on their behalf, they faced some opposition from the Africans. Other times, Africans accepted recruitment joyfully, believing they were to be rich—if they returned alive.³⁰ In a place like the Gold Coast, most soldiers readily accepted the call to arms. In some parts of Africa, the Africans perceived the war as a burden on resources, which prompted them to continuously express resentment against European recruitment. Edward affirms that Europeans' mass recruitment of African troops had obvious advantages. Unlike other regions in the world, recruiting troops from Africa was cheaper, faster, and done without much opposition due to the commitment and dedication of most Africans.³¹

Edward estimates the death toll of African soldiers and carriers who fought on the part of Britain to exceed 100,000 people.³² While men died in war after being shot, others suffered from

²² Strachan Hey, *The First World War in Africa* (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 13-16.

²³ Hey, *The First World War in Africa*, 21.

²⁴ Hey, *The First World War in Africa*, 5-6.

²⁵ Hey, *The First World War in Africa*, 13.

²⁶ Hey, *The First World War in Africa*, 3.

²⁷ Hey, *The First World War in Africa*, 6.

²⁸ Paice Edward, *World War I The African Front* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2008), 1

²⁹ Edward, *World War I*, 125.

³⁰ Edward, *World War I*, 299.

³¹ Edward, *World War I*, 299.

³² Edward, *World War I*, 21.

diseases, including dysentery, which could not be treated in the forest. Sicknesses such as influenza, ear infections, and respiratory problems spread through Africa.³³

Unlike Farwell, Edward fails to emphasize the role African women played in the First World War. Again, he limited his focus to casualties and the financial cost of the war without considering the changes in territorial boundaries nor the tensions the war created which pushed the colonies to fight for political participation. Among the topics Edward neglects are the wartime experiences the military and non-military members gained, which later resulted in the formation of nationalist movements and demand for legislative control, the fall of cocoa price during the last months in 1916 due to the British blockade of trade with the Central Powers and their colonies, and the Prince of Wales Fund the Gold Coast sent to support Great Britain during the war.

Anne Samson's *World War I in Africa, The Forgotten Conflict among European Powers* argues the East African campaign was the longest among all the campaigns of the war, with major fighting taking place in East Africa and later extending to other neighboring regions in Africa.³⁴ Initially, Britain rejected the idea of using black and colored troops. By 1915, blacks and colored Africans functioned as drivers, grooms, and hands in both Europe and Africa. In the later years, the tensions Germany and her allies created compelled the Entente Powers to train "colored" and black Africans to fight in the war.³⁵ Soldiers relied heavily on local women to supply them with socks, food, and other necessities.³⁶ Assistance from local women sustained the troops for years, although the challenge of maintaining supplies remained to the end of the war. Samson also argues that, behind the scene, various nations built relations with other nations to gain military and economic support from each other.³⁷ In the end, the United South African nation aided the victory over German South West Africa.³⁸

Overall, Samson asserts the war drew on the natural resources of Africans as they sought to help their colonial masters. Africans paid much of the debt which the Europeans depended on in their attempt to fight and defend their colonies.³⁹ In addition, Africans paid for the war against German South West Africa which cost €23m and that of East Africa, the more disastrous of the two, which cost €72m. In human terms, the war in German South West Africa led to the death of over 2,266 men, while that of East Africa took the lives of over 100,000 men.⁴⁰

Samson's work complements previous works on Africa and the First World War. In particular, she demonstrates that the role of African women in the war, which could not be underestimated since they were the suppliers of food and other necessities to both soldiers and carriers. She also brings to light some activities which took place behind the scenes while the war was ongoing such as the formation of alliances among nations. In addition, she illustrates how the war was fought in the air, as compared to other earlier writers who focused on the land and the sea.

Nonetheless, Samson only briefly treats the impact of the war. Other developments such as the outbreak of diseases, changes in Africa's political map, and the reduction in the roles of traditional chiefs were left out from his analysis. Additionally, the Gold Coast regiments, which fought vehemently on the part of Britain, receive cursory treatment. While he depicts a war that extended to all regions in Africa, North Africa is left out of his discussions. Moreover, the Funds for Relief of Disabled Soldiers, which the Gold Coast provided; the Airplane Fund, which the chiefs and people of Kwahu, New Juaben, and Akim Abuakwa sent to support the war; and the expansion

³³ Edward, *World War I*, 89.

³⁴ Anne Samson, *World War I in Africa: The Forgotten Conflict among the European Powers* (London: I.B Tauris, 2013), 3-4.

³⁵ Samson, *World War I in Africa*, 89.

³⁶ Samson, *World War I in Africa*, 143.

³⁷ Samson, *World War I in Africa*, 167-185.

³⁸ Samson, *World War I in Africa*, 85.

³⁹ Samson, *World War I in Africa*, 25.

⁴⁰ Samson, *World War I in Africa*, 222.

of transportation and communication networks, which began from the war times to support military campaigns were neglected. Sir Frederick Gordon Guggisberg, the Governor of the Gold Coast from 1919, developed roads and communication systems in present-day Ghana to revitalize the economic and social status quo which the war had destroyed.

Timothy Stapleton's *Africa: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century* is one of the most recent books on World War I in Africa. Stapleton argues that during the war, Europeans viewed Africa as a workforce and resource reservoir.⁴¹ The first British soldier to fire a shot happened in German Togoland. Besides, and the last German force seized before the war ended also took place in Africa, Northern Rhodesia (modern-day Zambia). Stapleton argues the war expanded to North Africa due to European interest in protecting their colonies. In North Africa, the Ottoman Turks began the war as a result of their invasion of Egypt, a British colony. The Sanussi in Libya joined the Central Powers to fight against the British.⁴² The Ottoman Turks supported the Sanussi to rebel against the Italians in Libya and the British in Egypt.⁴³ In discussing the role of Africans as troops, he asserts the British were initially reluctant to use black soldiers in their wars in Europe. They relied heavily on the white South African soldiers. However, at the height of the war, Britain recruited black African soldiers to fight in Palestine against the Ottoman Turks.⁴⁴

Stapleton explains how the war resulted in the restructuring of the colonial map of Africa and empowering of the colonial system.⁴⁵ After the war, part of German Togoland now became part of the British Gold Coast, while Western Cameroon also became part of British Nigeria. The war also led to an increase in rebellions in Africa due to the European powers' numerous military and financial demands. Stapleton explains how the absence of soldiers and police led to multiple revolts in Africa. Between 1915 and 1916, the British appointment of abusive and corrupt chiefs, as well as local police in the northern region of Gold Coast, led to a serious revolt.⁴⁶ In the Bongo area in the northern part of modern-day Ghana, riots broke out between local police and a corrupt chief who the British had appointed to rule the people.⁴⁷

The Europeans demand for resources and the need to raise funds to support the war made the colonial powers mount pressure on the African colonies. In response, some colonies rebelled.⁴⁸ Stapleton argues the experience gained from the war motivated Africans to form nationalist movements to demand independence. For instance, educated elites formed the National Congress of British West Africa in 1920 to fight for their rights, for representation, and for independence from European rule. Having fought in defense of Europeans, educated African elites were now optimistic they could represent themselves. In French West Africa, the war disrupted agriculture activities. The able-bodied men were recruited to the battlefield, while the few who were left at home fled into the bush.⁴⁹

Stapleton's work furthers the historiography of World War I. He reinforces the fact that most Africans died both on the battlefield and at home. Distinctively, he discusses the outbreak of the war in North Africa beginning in Egypt. For the first time, North African troops were given detailed discussion as soldiers who fought for the European powers. Also, he describes the demand for independence, the shifting African map, and rebellions in Africa which the war caused. It was after the war when the political map of Africa changed: German Togoland became part of the

⁴¹ Timothy Stapleton, *Africa: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2018), 36.

⁴² Stapleton, *Africa: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, 43-44.

⁴³ Stapleton, *Africa: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, 36.

⁴⁴ Stapleton, *Africa: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, 44-45.

⁴⁵ Stapleton, *Africa: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, 36-37.

⁴⁶ Stapleton, *Africa: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, 46-47.

⁴⁷ Stapleton, *Africa: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, 46.

⁴⁸ Stapleton, *Africa: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, 45-46.

⁴⁹ Stapleton, *Africa: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, 46.

British Gold Coast, and Western Cameroon became part of British Nigeria. The war presented Africans the opportunity to fight for independence after the eye-opening experience of fighting in the war and supporting the Europeans with food and funds. Stapleton also highlights the appointment of local chiefs in Africa. During the war, the colonial powers replaced traditional authorities which they believed were supporting rebellious activities. Europeans appointed new leaders who were not from the royal families to rule the region. These appointments of people resulted in constant wars between the royal families and family members of the newly appointed leaders.

Stapleton, however, neglects the defensive strategies the Gold Coast colony adopted in defending Elmina, Ada, Volta, Cape Coast, and the Northern borders. The Gold Coast, the British colony which shared a border with German Togoland, had to implement diverse defensive strategies to defend itself against a possible German attack. Nigeria, which also shared a border with German Cameroons, adopted defensive measures which went untreated in Stapleton's discussion. Besides, Stapleton did not mention any material support the Africans provided during the war. Private subscriptions for eleven airplanes in the Gold Coast given to the war council; the roles of non-military Africans who served as motor drivers, engineers; and medical assistants, the educated elites who were sent from Cape Coast in Gold Coast to the Cameroons as a support to the military; and the heavy postwar inflation which made it difficult for people to meet their needs all were ignored in the discussion.

The latest contribution to the discussion came from a group of African scholars who collaborated on a book titled *Africa and the First World War: Remembrance, Memories, and Representations after 100 years*. Their study starts with an introduction addressing the formation and the role of the Gold Coast Regiment in fighting for the British during the war.⁵⁰ The regiment conquered German Togoland.⁵¹ In capturing German Cameroon, the British relied heavily on the Gold Coast Regiment. After subduing Cameroon, the British and their allies marched against German East Africa. The Gold Coast suffered heavy casualties as most of the troops got injured or died in the battle against Cameroon.⁵² The British also recruited and trained Nigerian soldiers. In 1916, Nigerian soldiers supplemented the Entente Forces in fighting for the victory in German East Africa.⁵³ The Entente powers required the colonies to increase the production of foodstuffs and other materials to support the war. Moreover, the colonies provided financial contributions and the supply of cocoa, cotton, palm products, and minerals.⁵⁴ The Europeans used the colonial chiefs in the recruitment of troops, collection of taxes, transportation of minerals, and other products to support the various campaigns.⁵⁵

In their contributions to *Africa and the First World War*, De-valera Botchway and Kwame Osei Kwarteng posit that the war destroyed the West African economy since Germans who had engaged

⁵⁰ Colonel J. Hagan, "The Role of the Gold Coast Regiment towards the Defeat of the Germans in Africa during World War I," in *Africa and the First World War: Remembrance, Memories, and Representations after 100 years*, eds. De-Valera NYM Botchway and Kwame Osei Kwarteng, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 3.

⁵¹ Colonel J. Hagan, "The Role of the Gold Coast Regiment towards the Defeat of the Germans in Africa during World War I," 5.

⁵² Colonel J. Hagan, "The Role of the Gold Coast Regiment towards the Defeat of the Germans in Africa during World War I," 8-10.

⁵³ Ibiang O. Ewa, "Nigerian Soldiers in the East African Campaign of the First World War: 1916-1917," in *Africa and the First World War: Remembrance, Memories, and Representations after 100 years*, 12.

⁵⁴ Adebayo A. Lawal, "African Mobilization of Agricultural Resources in British West Africa during the First World War," in *Africa and the First World War: Remembrance, Memories, and Representations after 100 years*, 72.

⁵⁵ Samuel Bewiadzi and Margaret Ismaila, "Chieftaincy and Indirect Rule: The Nature, Politics, and Exploits of Chiefs during the First World War in West Africa (1914-1930)," in *Africa and the First World War: Remembrance, Memories, and Representations after 100 years*, 138-140.

in export of cocoa, palm oil, and palm kernel were excluded from export activities in West Africa. Additionally, the mass recruitment of African troops led to the shortage of labor since most able-bodied men were taken away.⁵⁶ The war also led to rampant revolts and protest movements which sought to challenge colonial authorities.⁵⁷

Botchway and Kwarteng break new ground in discussing Nigerian troops who assisted in conquering East Africa. They also emphasize how the colonies provided financial assistance, as well as resources like minerals and cocoa to support the war. Colonial masters used the chiefs in the mobilization of troops and collection of taxes towards the war. The authors explain how the war led to labor shortages due to the mass recruitment of troops. Everywhere, the war generated pressure on colonial resources, led to rampant revolts, and increased protest movements in the various colonies.

However, Botchway and Kwarteng neglected North Africa as a theatre of war. During the war, some battles took place in North Africa as Turks tried to capture Egypt from the British. In addition, the Gold Coast's dispatch of airplanes in support of the war is neglected. Moreover, Botchway and Kwarteng fail to discuss the roles of women, who served as nurses and suppliers of food and other products. Their broader treatment of the whole of Africa does not bring out the specific contributions and the specific impact on each colony.

Today, no serious scholar would deny that Africans made a substantial military contribution toward World War I. In both Africa and Europe, African soldiers were recruited to the battlefield. Moreover, Africans contributed materially and monetarily to support the war. The war had a tremendous impact on Africa. Various revolts, the formation of nationalist movements, and the demand for independence all were precipitated by the outbreak of the war. Although scholars do not agree on the number of Africans who died in the war, they all agree that Africans died in massive numbers due to the war. Over the last several decades, scholars have moved from seeing Africa Africans merely as a theatre and Africans as combatants to one when Africans were seen as material and monetary contributors. Recently scholars have factored in additional political, social, and economic impacts. Adding to scholarship that one focused mostly on the loss of life, diseases, and famine. On the other hand, issues such as the changes in family structure have not been explored. There remains a need for more research to focus on Africa as combatant, theater of war, a financier, and as a place that experienced the full impact of World War I.

⁵⁶Kwame O. Kwarteng, "World War I: The Role of the Gold Coast and Asante towards the British Victory," in *Africa and the First World War: Remembrance, Memories, and Representations after 100 years*, eds. De-Valera NYM Botchway and Kwame Osei Kwarteng, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 46.

⁵⁷Kwame O. Kwarteng, "World War I: The Role of the Gold Coast and Asante towards the British Victory," 49.